

Retired firefighter dies on vacation

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Mississauga firefighters are mourning the loss of one of their own following what they're calling the shocking death of a recently-retired district chief while vacationing in the Caribbean.

Paul Van Zutphen, 60, of Oakville,

who spent more than 30 years with Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services before retiring last fall, died of an apparent drowning on Friday while with his wife in Barbados.

Insp. David Welch of the Royal Barbados Police Force said Van Zutphen was swimming off Crane Beach when two lifeguards were called to help him as he appeared to

be having difficulty in the water.

Police are treating the case as "an unnatural death," Welch said.

Funeral arrangements have yet to be made, as a coroner in the Barbados will perform an autopsy this week.

"It's a big shock to all of us," said Mississauga Fire Chief John McDougall, who worked with Van

Zutphen for five years in the 1980s. "Paul was ready to retire. He had a plan. He was an extremely healthy guy."

McDougall said Van Zutphen was a "leader" and will be sorely missed.

Deputy Chief Greg Laing, who joined the service with Van Zutphen in 1980, said he was in good shape.

Van Zutphen was an avid squash

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player and golfed regularly.

"It's shocking, very, very shocking," he said. "All of us who knew Paul are just floored."

Fire officials say Van Zutphen moved up the ranks with the fire department, becoming a district chief several years ago. One of the highlights of his career, firefighters say, was watching his nephew, Kyle Van Zutphen, follow in his footsteps and join the fire department in 2010.

Mississauga firefighter Steve Holleran tweeted Friday that Van Zutphen was, "One of the best district chiefs" in the fire department.



Paul Van Zutphen